



Allandale Neighbor

June 2022
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CONTENTS

President's Letter	2
Lettuce Recycle	7
Allandale Bird Notes	9
Kern's Flower Beetles	10
Gullett Good News.....	10
Real Estate Market Update.....	11
Quick Bites	12
Russell's Bakery & Coffee Bar.....	12
Comedor	14

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Allandale's 4th of July Parade Approaches!

Access the online event site on page 15

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The Balcones Fault Zone near Allandale Neighborhood

R. C. Smyth

A question received after my April newsletter article was: Does the Balcones fault run along the middle of 49th Street between Shoal Creek Boulevard and Bull Creek Road? My answer was, "Nope." But, after looking more closely at a geologic map of the area, I realized I was almost wrong!

Following is a long answer to the question posed. Faults are really interesting to geologists, in part because they are usually not just a single feature, but a zone of features representing deformation and fracturing of earth's

crust. The fractures are two-dimensional, or planar, and form at an angle relative to the land surface; this angle is called the "dip." The orientation of a horizontal surface of a fault is called the "strike." The term "fault" implies movement

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

Safety Tips For Your Home

Julie Peckham

For most of us, our homes are our refuge and the place we feel most safe. We rarely think about what we can do to our living spaces to decrease our chances of having an accident. However, according to the National Safety Council, 53.6 percent of all injury-involved accidents occur at home, with poisoning, falls and fire being the most common. Below are some practical tips to avoid injury in our homes.

Bathrooms

Most falls at home occur in the bathroom. From slipping on wet floors

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Let's Share the Road & Be Good Neighbors

Julie Peckham

Neighborhoods are made up of a variety of personalities and interests, like a family. Allandale is our much-loved neighborhood made up of thousands of people with a variety of personalities and interests. My mother was a bit of a Pollyanna and used to say, "Why can't you all get along?" As a neighborhood "family" wouldn't it be great if we could all agree on how things should be? Realistically, almost 5,000 Allandale residents may not always agree, but mutual respect, kindness and patience are critical as we use our shared resources: the roads, sidewalks, park

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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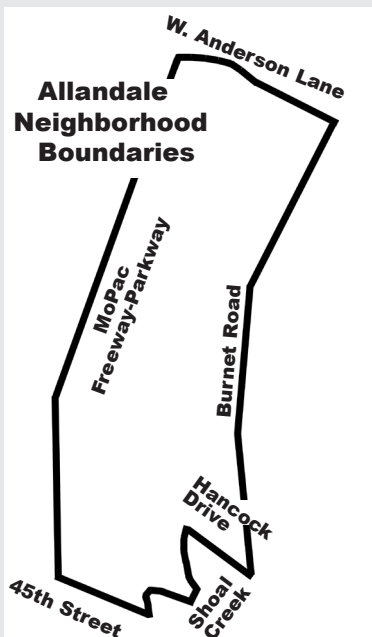
ANA Executive Committee meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month at NW Rec Center. General Membership meetings are held in April and October. (Meetings are currently held via Zoom)

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President's Letter

Hans Magnusson, ANA President

(512) 522-8773, ana@hmviking.com

Dear Allandale Neighbors:

Anxiety over crime continues to be a theme in this midterm election year. The anxiety appears to be driven by certain media outlets repeating a message of out-of-control crime that is not based on facts or statistics. Our neighborhood continues to be safe with no major criminal activity.

When 18-year-olds can easily and legally shop for an arsenal in the local gun store and then go out and shoot up an elementary school or a grocery store, stolen guns may seem trivial in comparison. Criminals, on the other hand, have more obstacles obtaining guns when background checks are done. However, stealing guns from parked vehicles is an inexpensive option. Moronic gun owners leaving weapons in vehicles is malpractice of the 2nd amendment. If you really want a gun for protection, then there's only one place it possibly can have any use and that is in your hand when confronting a threat. A gun doesn't do any good left in a car for a thief to steal, as one unhappy neighbor discovered in the morning—his truck had been burglarized during the previous night. In a similar fashion, having a locked and loaded gun in your purse or bedside drawer without any safety when you have kids in the house is asking for a tragedy to happen.

The city continues to struggle for answers to affordable housing. Work is ongoing at City Council on making Vertical Mixed-Use buildings attractive for developers, affordable for families, while not upsetting neighborhoods. It's nearly an intractable problem that few if any cities have solved. I hope that our city leaders find a solution to this problem that will maintain the character of our 'hood while also providing affordable housing for workers needed by local businesses.

Good grief people,
Hans ☘

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The Balcones Fault Zone Near Allandale Neighborhood

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

along the plane of the fracture.

To aid understanding of this long answer I've generated a figure, which is a screen capture from a published geological map (source cited below) with labels overlain for selected streets, water courses, scale, and orientation (north arrow). It is a busy figure, but one can only do so much in an afternoon using power point! The original map and figure are in color, so I've occasionally added color notes in case you are reading this on-line.

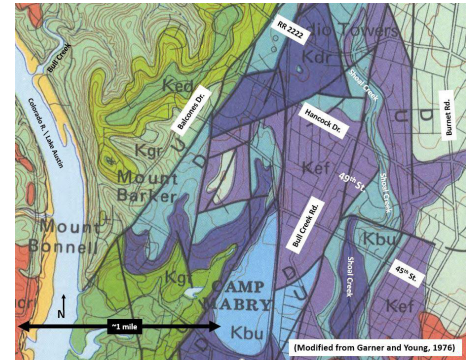
We geologists like to name our rocks. This is not just for fun—the names are associated with descriptions of features and divisions of time. Labels on the base map for the figure include Kgr, Ked, Kdr, Kbu, and Kef. K is the abbreviation for Cretaceous-age, and Kgr is the abbreviation for the Cretaceous Glen

Rose group of rocks, which are mostly limestone. Similarly, Ked stands for Cretaceous Edwards rocks, also mostly limestone; Kdr for Del Rio clay or claystone; Kbu for Buda limestone; and Kef for Eagle Ford shale. Following geologic convention, I list these geologic unit names from older to younger. The youngest limestone in our area is Kau, the Upper Cretaceous Austin Chalk, which is the lightest green along the eastern edge of the figure, under the label for Burnet Road.

The Balcones Fault is really a ZONE of faults, the traces of which are shown as heavy black lines on the figure. The letters “U” and “D” denote upward or downward movement of rocks on either side of a fault. The Balcones Fault Zone (BFZ) is oriented *roughly* northeast to southwest where it crosses the Allandale neighborhood. You can look on Wikipedia (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Balcones_Fault) to see the full extent of the BFZ in Texas.

So, the BFZ is not just one fracture in the ground, but a pattern of faults across

the zone. The northwestern-most fault in the figure parallels Balcones Drive, where I have it labelled. Burnet Road bounds the BFZ on the east, at least in Allandale. Topography is also shown on the base map as thin, lighter-colored curved lines. Note that there are many more closely spaced topographic lines to the west and northwest of the BFZ. This is a graphic representation for hilly terrain relative to flatter areas to the east and southeast. The hilly, upthrown Glen Rose (Kgr) and Edwards (Ked) rocks, in shades of green



Geological map of Allandale area

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in the figure, mark the beginning of the Texas Hill Country right here in Austin

Back to the question: Many of the component faults in our little area of the BFZ strike (i.e., are oriented) northeast-to-southwest. But there are also fault segments oriented at angles to the main fault trend. One example is a nearly east-west fault segment just north of the label for 45th Street, in Buda limestone (Kbu). Whew, this is only a few blocks south of 49th Street! Notice how the path of Shoal Creek changes from nearly north-south to more of an east-west orientation where it hits this approximately east-west fault segment. This is a great example of how water preferentially follows cracks. If you look on Google Maps, you can better see these changes in the direction of Shoal Creek.

Clays of the Del Rio (Kdr) and Eagle Ford (Kef) are death to building foundation stability, at least for those not specially engineered—and sometimes even for those that are! This is because the clay minerals that are the components of these rocks shrink and swell with changes

in moisture. Roads built upon Kdr and Kef don't stay level for long either, and they crack a lot! I just jumped on my bicycle to ride up and down 49th Street between Strass Drive and Bull Creek Road. A short northeast-southwest fault segment crossing 49th Street and apparently ending at Shoal Creek Boulevard separates Kef to the west, in light purple on the figure, from Kbu to the east, in light blue. On the Kef side between Bull Creek Road and Finley Drive, brand new pavement is already cracking. Farther east along 49th Street, the road is in bad shape. Even farther east toward and north along Strass Drive, on Kbu rocks, the road is fairly flat with few cracks, mostly because of the type of rock on which it is built.

Another example of differences in stability of limestone and the local clay-rich layers can be seen in Austin Memorial Park Cemetery. Several faults cross the area at various angles just north of my Hancock Drive label. Walk around the cemetery and you will see gravestones at odd angles in some places—areas with

Kef (light purple) or Kdr (dark purple). In areas where fault-bound slices of Kbu (light blue) are present, the grave stones stay in more stable orientation. Check it out!

Thanks for your interest in geology. Please keep the questions coming!

Reference: Garner, L. E., and Young, K. P., 1976, Environmental Geology of the Austin Area: An Aid to Urban Planning: The University of Texas at Austin, Bureau of Economic Geology, Report of Investigations No. 86, 39 pp., 7 plates. ✂

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:

We'd love for readers to submit newsletter ideas, stories, and reactions to articles.

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Safety Tips For Your Home

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to bathtub falls or drownings, there are lots of potential dangers. Always be sure to use an area rug, foam flooring, or anti-slip adhesive treads in the shower or tub, as well as on the bathroom floor to avoid falls. Medications and cleaners are the most common sources of poisonings, so always keep cleaning and laundry supplies, medicines, and pesticides in a high cabinet out of reach of children or use child-proof safety latches so they are not accessible to younger children.

Heavy furniture

Injuries can occur from lifting or moving heavy items. When moving heavy items always lift with your legs and not your back, keep your back straight and use your lower limbs to support your weight. Also, get the right equipment for moving furniture: using a dolly, furniture sliders, and other moving tools will reduce the possibility of suffering an injury. Know your limits! Don't hesitate to ask a friend or neighbor for assistance.

Tripping

To minimize tripping hazards throughout your home, keep clutter on floors picked up, including electric cords,

and watch for pets that nap in the middle of the floor, or just like to stay close to their pet parents.

Secure your throw rugs or rug pads to the floor using double sided tape. On hard flooring surfaces, be sure to wipe up spills immediately. Adequate lighting will illuminate potential tripping hazards, so add extra light to your indoor and outdoor spaces, and be sure to replace light bulbs as needed.

Fire Hazards

Avoid injury and damages due to fire by never leaving burning candles or fireplaces unattended. If you have little ones at home, use a safety gate around the fireplace when in use to keep them at a safe distance. Keep paper or flammable items away from toasters and stovetop burners. Make sure you have a working fire extinguisher, regularly test your smoke alarms, and change the batteries every 6 months. To help remember to change your batteries regularly, set a reminder to do it every January and July 1.

Inspect

Schedule your home safety walk-through with a critical eye looking for potential hazards before any of these things happen to you or your loved ones.

Stay Safe Allandale ☼

Let's Share the Road & Be Good Neighbors

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space and bike lanes.

The updates made to Shoal Creek Boulevard over 2 years ago may not be ideal for many people. There are different opinions on the safety and effectiveness of the bi-directional bike lanes, narrowing of the driving lanes, and the Foster Lane and Shoal Creek Boulevard intersection updates. It's necessary to approach the challenges presented by the changes with kindness and respect, to maintain the welcoming, friendly Allandale neighborhood spirit we are known for.

Tips for all users of Shoal Creek Boulevard and our Allandale roads

Understand that there may be delivery trucks stopped in the bike lanes or parking lanes for short periods of time. Behave in a patient and neighborly manner.

Drivers, understand that you may not be able to drive as fast as you used to, and may have to slow down and yield to pedestrians crossing at the crossing areas. Always be prepared to stop quickly.

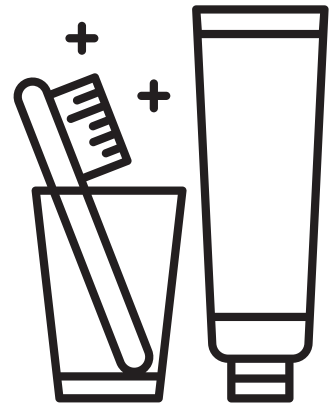
Cyclists, on Thursdays, be on the lookout for trash, recycling, and compost bins

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in the bike lanes. Consider moving the ones that are blocking bike lanes toward the curb after they have been emptied. Please do not set them on the sidewalks.

Those of us who ride bikes in the bike lanes need to be mindful that neighbors on the west side of Shoal Creek Boulevard have a lot to watch out for and may not see us. Be prepared to stop quickly if necessary.

For cyclists who are about to pass another cyclist, it is a courtesy to announce “on your left” just before you pass, so the cyclist being overtaken holds steady or moves over a bit to avoid a collision. This is particularly important on the northern end of Shoal Creek Boulevard where there are many blind curves.

At intersections, cars and cyclists should obey all traffic laws. At all four-way stops, use the same queuing sequence regardless of type of vehicle—including bikes.

And PLEASE, use your signals when turning or moving over. When we let others know our intentions, there will be fewer surprises, and fewer accidents! ☘

Lettuce Recycle

Dena Houston

Can recycling one plastic bottle make a difference? It's a start!

One person, recycling one plastic bottle, represents a lifestyle which helps promote a healthier planet. Here is one of the most important ways recycling gives the Earth a healthier future.



Recycling reduces the need for landfills — a huge contributor to climate change

The most pressing environmental concern with landfills is their release of methane gas. Methane is 84 times more effective at absorbing the sun's heat than carbon dioxide, making it one of the most potent greenhouse gases and a huge contributor to climate change.

Landfills are very costly. They are designed to bury trash rather than convert and reuse it. When a landfill closes, it must be maintained for at least 30 years to prevent pollution of soil and ground water. It is very costly to protect our natural resources from landfill contamination.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

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Lettuce Recycle

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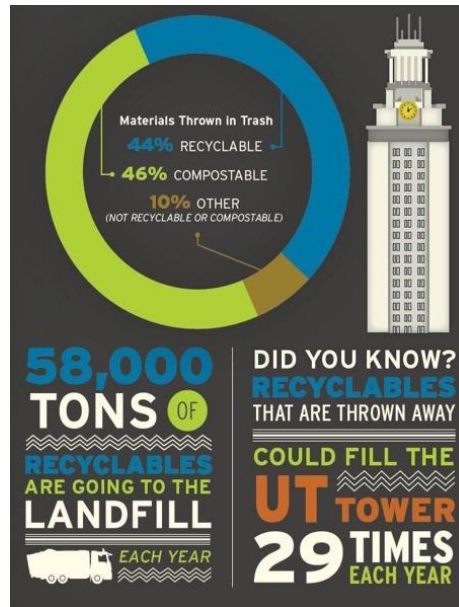
How the amount of garbage you produce affects the landfill

There are four sizes of trash carts available in Austin: 24, 32, 64, and 96 gallons. If you fill up a 96-gallon cart every week, you will add almost 5,000 gallons of garbage to the landfill every year. This is equal to filling a small in-ground swimming pool. If you fill a 24-gallon cart every week, you will add only 1,248 gallons of garbage to the landfill every year.

How long does it take for items that can be recycled in Austin to decompose if they are in a landfill instead?

- Plastic bags – 10 to 20 years
- Glass bottle – 1 million years
- Plastic Bottles – 500+ years
- Wool socks – 1 to 5 years
- Leather shoes – 25 to 40 years
- Styrofoam cup – 100 years

(Source: UK Department of the Environment)



The picture above tells a chilling story. How easy it would be to get the City of Austin to Zero Waste by 2040 if we all composted and recycled. It all starts with recycling one plastic bottle!

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

How do I recycle metal screens?

Metal (not fabric) screens are accepted

at the Recycle & Reuse Drop Off Center.

What do I do with the plant pots and trays from the garden center?

Most of them have a recycling symbol on them. If they do, they go into the blue recycling cart. Please shake the dirt off first.


What do I do with plastic bags that contained fertilizer, compost, soil, and mulch?

Due to contamination, they cannot go into the plastic bag collection bin at the grocery store. These must go into the trash cart. The Recycle & Reuse Drop Off Center used to accept them, but no longer has a buyer because of the contamination issue.

For more questions about how to recycle specific items, and what to do if an item can't be recycled, consult the City of Austin recycling website:

<https://www.austintexas.gov/whatdo>

Stay tuned for future tips that will include creative ways to recycle or reuse. If you have any questions or recycling ideas, please send them to recycling@hpbw-bana.org ☘




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Allandale Bird Notes

Nicole Netherton

Allandale neighbor and Executive Director of Travis Audubon

Many of our neighbors have started noticing and appreciating birds during the pandemic—are you one of those? I hope so! Please enjoy these Allandale bird notes and join us on our next bird walk in Northwest Park on June 18.

It's summertime and birding is easy, so long as you get out early in the morning to avoid the heat! As migration slows down and temperatures rise, it's a good time to notice some of our common birds' behavior. Many species—Northern Cardinals, Blue Jays, Carolina Chickadees and Titmice—have already had their first round of chicks and are probably being harassed by hungry fledglings bopping around your backyards. These birds will be looking for insects to feed their young, and a great way to help them out in our increasingly dry conditions is to put out water daily. Just clean your birdbath and don't let it stand for more than a day or so to avoid mosquitoes breeding.

At the pond in the park there has been a lot of the usual heron activity with breeding Green and Yellow-crowned Night Herons. They are tree nesters and roosters and can often be seen hunting around the edge for fish and crawdads.

Don't let them fool you—these charismatic birds are impressive predators for other pond life! But their chicks can be vulnerable to our many turtles looking for a snack.

You may have noticed lots of Purple Martins in and around their gourd houses—they are some of our earliest spring migrants and likely have a second clutch of babies on their hands! They are beautiful birds, our largest swallow, and incredibly smart and social creatures. Groups of thousands of Purple Martins will start preparing for their fall migration in July, and you can experience a "tornado of birds" at our annual Purple Martin Parties. It is a truly amazing spectacle and fun for the whole family—all in a local parking lot! You can find out more information at travisaudubon.org, and we'll keep everyone posted once we discover their roosting location.

Summertime is my favorite time to listen at sunset for amazing aerial insectivores on the wing. Two with very distinctive sounds are Chimney Swifts—so-called "flying cigars" with a high-pitched bubbling, pebbly song. They swoop and flutter high in the sky and require vertical surfaces to perch and build their nests. We have some neighbors who have built special towers for them to help this bird in decline find good nesting spots. Another personal favorite is the Common Nighthawk with its erratic bat-like flight

and sharp "EARRP!" call. I often hear them in the Allandale HEB parking lot—they hunt the insects drawn to the lights.

There are many of us Allandale Bird Nerds around. Please join us in learning more about and appreciating our avian friends in the neighborhood.



Chimney swift from <http://www.theonlinezoo.com/> taken by Jeff Whitlock



Green Heron from <http://www.theonlinezoo.com> taken by Jeff Whitlock. ☘

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Kern's Flower Beetles

Wizzie Brown

Kern's flower beetles are a type of scarab beetle, closely related to May and June beetles. These are medium sized beetles, reaching about 1/3 inch in length. There are multiple color variations ranging from all black, to brownish-orange or creamy white with black mark-



ings.

These beetles are pollen feeders and can be found in multiple types of flowers. Often you will find numerous beetles in a single flower. Treatment of these beetles is optional as they feed on pollen and typically do not eat the flower itself. If you feel the need to remove the beetles, you can hand pick them and dump them into a bucket of soapy water.

For more information or help with identification, contact Wizzie Brown, Texas AgriLife Extension Service Program Specialist at (512) 854-9600.



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Gullett Good News

Diane Hurtado

Greetings Gecko Community! The 2021-2022 school year ended for Gullett Elementary School last week. Class parties were enjoyed, the 5th grade held their fantastic Promotion Ceremony, and all the kids celebrated with the graduating high school seniors who returned to Gullett for the annual Senior Walk. There were lots of excited smiles and a few tears as students and staff said goodbye for the summer.

The Gullett PTA, under the leadership of President Melissa Moehring, has worked tirelessly to support our amazing faculty and staff and provide a safe and engaging learning environment for our children. What the PTA has accomplished this year is truly incredible! The school staff and break rooms were redecorated and given some much needed TLC. The fire ants on campus were wiped out (a huge investment of time and money). The health, safety and beauty of the Gullett gardens and grounds were improved. The greenhouse was fixed. New outdoor seating was added. The portables were repainted. The PTA invested in the out-

door sound system. School supplies were delivered to classrooms. The Gullett Alumni Scholarship award was established. The PTA helped to sponsor a teacher team building retreat. The first Gullett Cultural Heritage Fair was held. The VIVA Gullett fundraiser was amazing, as was the book fair, field day, Kay Gooch Library dedication, school Carnival, and Tina the Tortoise's Retirement Party! The list could go on!

As we head into the summer months for some much-needed downtime, we're thankful for the administration, staff, volunteers, and community members who help to make our elementary school run. The Gullett community bands together to truly make it a school like no other place. Go Geckos! ☞



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Real Estate Market Update

Kaylee Romantic

As we entered the month of May, many of us noticed some changes in the real estate market. There are two major factors leading the charge in the most recent market changes: interest rates and increasing property taxes.

According to local Austin mortgage banker Ali Hedayatifar, “the biggest economic issue we are seeing is inflation as the consumer price index leaped 8.5 percent annually, the fastest pace since December, 1981. To combat inflation, the Federal Reserve is increasing the Federal Funds Rate, the interest

commercial banks charge when they lend money to one another for extremely short-term periods—literally, overnight. Although the Federal Funds Rate is not directly tied to mortgage rates, we are seeing a historic rise in mortgage rates tied to the record inflation. Mortgage rates have doubled in the past 5 months which has a significant impact on home affordability.

As mortgage rates rise, buyers begin to lose buying power. Below is an example of how the market shift has impacted mortgage payments.

Scenario 1		Scenario 2	
Purchase Price	\$500,000	Purchase Price	\$500,000
Down Payment	\$25,000	Down Payment	\$25,000
Loan	\$475,000	Loan	\$475,000
Rate, Fixed	3%	Rate, Fixed	6%
Term	30 years	Term	30 years
Monthly Payment (P&I)	\$2,003	Monthly Payment (P&I)	\$2,848

Irrespective of the higher rates compared to last year, rates are still low when compared to the last inflationary period in 1981 when mortgage rates were 17 percent. Furthermore, there is a massive housing shortage of over 5 million homes in America today. When comparing the inventory of homes for sale nationally from the last housing bubble in March, 2007, to the inventory in March, 2022, we see a significant difference. In March of 2007 there were 3.81 million homes on the market with limited demand, whereas in March, 2022, we saw 0.95 million homes on the market, a record low, with strong demand for housing. That leads to continued home appreciation that outpaces the increased cost of higher mortgage interest, and produces a low probability of a housing bubble. In the next 12-to-24 months we anticipate inflation to begin dropping, given the Federal Reserve’s monetary policy; therefore, mortgage rates will also decline as inflation cools, as inflation and mortgage rates are strongly correlated. This allows homeowners a perfect opportunity to purchase a home that is rapidly appreciating while subsequently refinancing their mortgage at a lower rate soon.” ☞



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Quick Bites

Robert Mace

A couple years ago I bought a t-shirt that showed a dumpster with “2020” written on the side and its contents on fire. I wish I could get an “s” added to the end of “2020” since our roaring twenties seem to be roaring out of control with the pandemic, war in Europe, and shooting after shooting. But as Mr. Rogers said, “Look for the helpers.” So kudos to local-to-Allandale **Chi'lantro**, close-to-Allandale **Drink.Well**, personal-fave **Justine's Brasserie**, and other restaurants around town for donating profits in late May to meet various needs in the aftermath of the Uvalde school shooting.

It's been an active couple months for closings and openings. **Way South Philly** at 5222 Burnet Road closed at the end of April, telling Eater Austin that higher costs and lack of help sealed the deal. Higher labor costs also claimed **Bill Miller Bar-B-Q** at 8103 Burnet Road. It also appears that **Local Foods'** presence at **Kitchen United** has sadly come to a close. **Pacha Organic Café** has moved from 4618 Burnet Road and down to 2915 Guadalupe Street.

Which Wich over in Northcross Center has closed, but in its place, **Russell's Bakery** has (quickly) opened (see review of Russell's, also over on Balcones Drive, in this issue). **Pflour Shop Bakery** at 7413 Burnet Road is opening on June 18. **Fuddruckers** is now rucking at Kitchen United. **Burnet Go To**, serving beer, wine, growlers, espresso, pastries, snacks, and soccer, has opened at 6800 Burnet Road, the old location of **The Growler Room**. I somehow missed **Kapatad Kitchen & Café**, specializing in Filipino food, opening over yonder on Far West Boulevard last year.

Top Notch has opened a satellite location up in Hutto. If you miss **Noble Sandwich Co.**, are willing to buy a ticket, and can bear the three-hour cavity check, the Co. is now resurrected at the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. **Rise Souffle**, somewhat delayed, is still expected to open in The Grove, and we still eagerly await **East Side Pies** at the old **Hey Cupcake** location on Burnet Road. **Carve American Grille** announced plans to open its second location at The Grove.

In other news, **Project Pollo** will be on Shark Tank seeking venture capital. And **Fonda San Miguel** is now under the wings of two new chefs, Mexico City native Carlos Monroy and sourcer (not sorcerer) Blanca Zesati. Monroy and Zesati debuted their expanded menu on Cinco de Mayo.

The kudos keep coming, of course, to our fine establishments. Austin Culture-map included **5280 Burgers & Taphouse** and **Yeni's Fusion** in their list of the best new restaurants in town. Thrillest included **Plant B**, **Citizen Eatery**, and **Tso** in their list of best places for vegans and vegetarians. Thrillest also gave shout-outs to **Taco Flats** (breakfast tacos to try before you die), **Pinthouse** (essential craft brewery) and **Fonda San Miguel** and **T-Lochs** (best Mexican). The monkeypoxers at Eater Austin infected **District Kitchen** and **Chez Zee** for desserts, **épicerie** for breakfast sandwiches, **Troy** for Mediterranean, **Ichiban** for sushi, **Picnik** for fluffy pancakes, **Andiamo's** and **Bufalina Due** for Italian, **Bartlett's** and **Little Deli** for most underrated, and **Bartlett's** for their 100-hour marinated-in-pineapple-sesame-and-ginger rib-eye.

For links and color photos, please visit www.austinwanderlist.com. ☼

Russell's Bakery & Coffee Bar

Robert Mace

Every good neighborhood needs a good bakery, and our neighborhood is fortunate to host several. One on the fringe (but within the stomach-hood) is Russell's Bakery & Coffee Bar over yonder at the corner of Hancock Drive and Balcones Drive. First opened by Russell Millner in Barton Hills in 1993 and then moved to Hancock in 1998, Russell's has been a stalwart of cake, coffee, and comestibles for nigh 30 years. And it just so happens that, when I started writing this review, I happened across the opening of a satellite Russell's in Northcross Center on Anderson Lane in the former location of Which Wich?

Russell's has what you want out of a local bakery: good coffee and espresso drinks, good pastries and pies, and good soups, sandwiches, and salads. Their cinnamon rolls are dense and buttery, their sandwiches thick, and their soups savory. Russell's has gluten-free items for those so disposed and has been creating custom cakes for decades. If tea suits you to a T,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14

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Russell's Bakery & Coffee Bar

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

they also have tea breads (and tea). The Italian Godfather (genoa salami, sliced ham, sliced turkey, provolone, cheddar, mustard, and a blessing of Caesar dressing on ciabatta) was particularly good (and the size of a bedded horse head). ☘



The Italian Godfather from Russel's Bakery & Coffee Bar

Comedor

Robert Mace

It's rare for us to walk out of a restaurant smiling because we just enjoyed the two best things we've ever eaten. In fact, it's never happened before. What's even more remarkable is that these two best things are in two broad categories: tacos and desserts. This is the magic of Comedor, the latest project by Philip Speer, he of the delicious but ill-fated (and missed) Bonhomie on Burnet Road and a four-time James Beard Award nominee. Comedor is also a remarkably no-holds-barred run at creating a restaurant. Speer and his investors not only built the restaurant from the ground up on a desirable downtown lot but hired none other than Tom Kundig out of Seattle to design a space best described as steam-punk Mexican.

We started with the Carrot Tostada (with sunflower sikil pak, queso fesca, radish, coriander; \$14). It made a good,



The Carrot Tostada from Comedor

light starter with a creamy nut flavor sharpened with raw radish. Next up was the Tuna Aguachile (citrus, costeno rojo, kelp chicharrón; \$23), a Sinaloa (central West Mexico) dish of raw fish in a pepper-infused sauce. The salty-fishy flavor and crunch of the fried kelp complemented the costeno-stained tuna. A pleasant low-buzz burn gently peaked after we finished the dish.

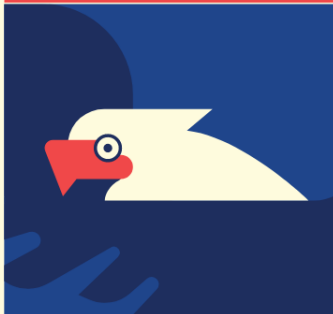
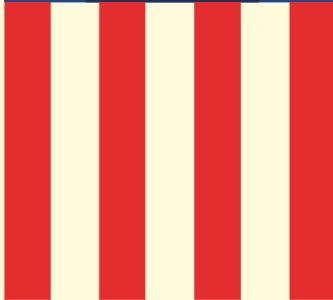
In my lifetime, I've eaten approximately 366,451 tacos, but I've never had tacos as perfectly prepared and composed as Comedor's Tacos de Pescado (with grilled cabbage, toreado aioli, and salsa verde; \$29). The tacos appear simple enough: house made tortillas of Oaxacan maize topped with fried fish and sprigs of cabbage and cilantro and a side-slice of radish. But they are so expertly executed as to bring tears of joy. "These tacos are like eating clouds," exclaimed The Bride. Indeed, the fish was perfectly, lightly fried and the tacos so delicately balanced with the masa, fish, veggies, and salsa that a bite floats around your mouth with a weightlessness you don't want to end.

We ended the evening with the Tamal de Chocolate (with caramelized milk ice cream and amaranth; \$15). Wow. Just

Wow. The dish looks like a scene out of *Avengers: Infinity War* with two opposing worlds careening toward each other but stopped a split second before the catastrophic collision. On one side is chocolate married to masa in its full, naked glory, blissfully bitter to its molten core. On the other side is the sweetness of ice cream rolled in black and white sesame seeds.

The dish is interactive: the user chooses how much sweetness of the ice cream they want to offset the bitterness of the chocolate. The revelation is the firing of taste buds that generally don't fire together creating a rollercoaster of euphoria. The Bride, who prefers chocolate on the bitter side, came alive after her first taste as if jumpstarted by Dr. Frankenstein. We chased it with a spectacular latte blessed with a rumor of horchata.

Comedor is truly a triumph of architecture and creative cuisine, and we're fortunate to see Speer's aesthetic and culinary vision fully implemented. We're looking forward to digging deeper into the menu, at least the Para la Mesa part. As far as we're concerned, there's only one dessert at Comedor. ☘



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